

TYOLET

translated by

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(1) Long ago, when Arthur reigned and governed Britain (also called England) there were not, I believe, as many people there as there are now. But Arthur, who was highly honored, had with him knights who were very courageous and bold. There are still plenty of knights who are quite famous and brave, but they are not the kind of men there were in the past. Then the strongest, best, and most generous knights used to set forth to seek and find adventures, night and day; even when they did not have squires, still they always travelled. They might not find a house or tower, or two or three, and similarly in the dark of night they would find marvelous adventures which they used to tell and relate.

(25) These adventures were re-told at court just as they happened: the learned scholars who lived then wrote them all down. They were put into Latin and written on parchment, in case there might again be a time when people would want to listen to them. Now they are told and recounted, translated from Latin into French; as our ancestors tell us, the Bretons composed numerous poems about them.

(37) I will tell you one of them which they composed, following the story as I know it, about a fine and clever young man, hardy, bold, and courageous. He was called Tyolet, and he was very good at capturing beasts; he would catch all the beasts that he wanted by his whistle. A fairy had given him this gift and taught him how to whistle: God never made any beast that Tyolet could not capture by his whistle.

(49) His mother was a lady who lived at that time in a forest. She had been married to a knight who lived there night and day. He stayed all alone in the forest; there was not a house within ten leagues. Fifteen years had passed since he died, and Tyolet had grown up handsome and tall. But he had never seen an armed knight during his whole life, nor did he see other people very often. He stayed in the woods with his mother and never left there. He had remained in the forest, for his mother loved him very much. So he wandered wherever he pleased, since he had nothing else to do. When the beasts heard him whistle they would all come to him at once, and he would kill the ones that he wanted

and take them to his mother. In this way he and his mother lived; he had no sister or brother.

(73) The lady was very noble and always acted reliably. One day she asked her son—graciously, because she loved him very much—to go into the woods and capture a stag. He carried out her wish; he went at once into the woods just as his mother had ordered. He travelled through the woods until the middle of the morning without finding any beast or stag; he was very upset with himself because he had found no beast. He wanted to go straight home, when he saw a big fat stag standing under a tree.

(88) He whistled immediately. The stag heard him and looked, but paid him no attention and just went away. It left the woods at a gentle pace, and Tyolet followed the stag until it led him right to a river. The stag crossed over; the river was big, swift-flowing, wide, long, and dangerous. When the stag had crossed the river, Tyolet looked around and saw a huge, fleshy roebuck coming toward him. He stopped and whistled, and the roebuck came toward him. Tyolet put out his hand and killed the beast. He drew his knife and thrust it into its body. While he was flaying the roebuck, the stag, which had crossed the river, changed its shape and appeared as a knight, completely dressed in armor near the edge of the water. He was mounted upon a war horse with flowing mane and armed as a knight should be. The youth saw him; he had never before seen such a sight. He looked on in amazement and stared for a long time. He was astonished to see such a thing as he had never seen before.

(119) As he watched intently, the knight addressed him and spoke to him first, in a good and kindly way; he asked Tyolet who he was, what he was searching for, and what his name was. Tyolet replied that he was very valiant and courageous, the son of the widow woman who lived in the great forest, “and those who want to call me by name, call me Tyolet. Now tell me, if you can, who are you, and what is your name?”

(133) The man who was standing on the shore answered him at once that he was called a “knight.” Tyolet asked what kind of beast a “knight” was, where it lived, and where it came from.

(139) “By my faith,” he answered, “I will tell you without a word of a lie. It is a very dreaded beast which captures and eats other beasts, and it quite often stalks the woods as well as the plain.”

(145) “By my faith,” said Tyolet, “I am astonished to hear that! Never, since I learned to walk and started travelling through the woods, have I ever found such a beast! I know about bears and lions and all

other kinds of game. There is not a beast in the woods that I do not know, and I capture them all without any trouble; but you I do not recognize at all! You seem to be a brave beast. Now tell me, Knight-Beast, what is that on your head? And what is that hanging around your neck? It's so red and so shiny!"

(159) "By my faith," says the knight, "I will tell you without a word of a lie. This is a kind of a headpiece called a 'helmet,' and it is made of steel all around. And this mantle that I am wearing is a shield striped with gold."

(165) "And what is that thing you are wearing, which is full of little holes?"

(167) "It is a tunic of finely-wrought iron; it is called a 'hauberk.'"

(169) "And what are you wearing on your feet? Kindly tell me."

(171) "They are called iron greaves; they are well-made and well-wrought."

(173) "And what is that which you have girded on? Tell me, if you please."

(175) "It is called a sword and is very beautiful; its blade is sharp and sturdy."

(177) "And that long piece of wood that you carry? Tell me and do not keep it from me."

(179) "Do you want to know?"

(179) "Yes, indeed."

(180) "It is a lance that I carry with me. Now I have told you the truth about everything that you have asked me."

(183) "Sir," said Tyolet, "I thank you. Would to God who does not lie that I might have clothes such as you have, so beautiful, so fine, and that I could have a tunic and a mantle such as you have, and the same kind of hat! Now tell me, Knight-Beast, by God and His feast day, if there are other beasts such as you, ones as beautiful as you."

(193) "Yes," said the knight, "truly. I will show you more than a hundred of them."

(195) Just a little later, according to the story, two hundred armed knights from the court of the King came out through the middle of a meadow. They had carried out the King's orders: they had captured a stronghold and put it to the torch, reducing it to ashes. They were all returning from there armed, in three well-ordered squadrons.

(205) Then Knight-Beast spoke to Tyolet and ordered him to go just a bit farther on and look across the river. Tyolet obeyed his order, looked rapidly about and saw the knights coming, fully armed on their chargers.

(213) "By my faith," he said, "I see the beasts who all have hats on their heads. I have never seen such beasts before, nor such hats as I see here! Would to God that I were a Knight-Beast!"

(219) The man who stood armed on the shore spoke to Tyolet again: "Would you be brave and bold?"

(222) "Yes, by my faith I swear it to you."

(223) And so he said: "Now you must leave. When you see your mother again, and when she speaks to you, she will say: 'Dear son, tell me what you are thinking and what is troubling you.' Tell her at once that you have much to think about, that you want to be like the Knight-Beast that you saw, and that this is why you are thoughtful. She will tell you immediately that she is sorry that you have seen the beast that traps and kills others. And you tell her that by your faith she will find no joy in you if you cannot be such a beast and have such a hat on your head. And as soon as she hears this, at once she will bring you an outfit exactly like this—a tunic and a mantle, a hat and a belt, shoes and a long, flat piece of wood just like those you have seen here."

(247) Then Tyolet departed, for he was eager to get home. He gave his mother the roebuck which he had brought and told her his adventure exactly as it had happened. His mother replied quickly that she was very upset that "You have seen a beast like this which captures and eats others!"

(257) "By my faith," says Tyolet, "this is how things stand: if I cannot be such a beast as the one I saw, I know for certain that you will have little joy from me!"

(261) But when his mother heard this, she answered him at once. She immediately brought to him all of the arms that she had—those which had belonged to her husband. She armed her son very well with them, and when he had mounted the horse, he indeed resembled a Knight-Beast.

(269) "Do you know now, dear son, what you must do? Go straight to King Arthur, and I will give you this advice: do not take as your companion any man and do not pay court to any woman of the common sort." Then he turned away from her, after she kissed and embraced him.

(277) Tyolet journeyed so far and so long, over hills, through fields and valleys, that he came to the court of the King, who was a courteous and valiant king. The King was sitting at dinner, having himself served magnificently. Tyolet entered, fully armed, just as he had come. He rode

his horse up to the dais, where Arthur the King was sitting. He didn't utter a word to him, nor did he even address him.

(289) "My friend," said the King, "dismount and come eat with us, and tell me what you are searching for, who you are, what name you have."

(293) "By my faith," said Tyolet, "I will tell you, and I will not eat before so doing. King, my name is "Knight-Beast," I have cut off many heads, and people call me Tyolet; I know very well how to capture game. I am the son, my dear lord, if it please you, of the widow of the forest. She has sent me to you to learn all that is appropriate. I want to learn good skills and courtesy and knighthood, and how to tourney and to joust, to spend and to give generously. For I have never before been at the court of a king; nor was there ever, I firmly believe, any other place where there was so much wealth and culture, chivalry and learning. Now I have told you what I am seeking, King, now tell me your opinion."

(313) The King said to him, "Sir Knight, I take you into my service. Come and eat."

(315) "My lord," said Tyolet, "I thank you."

(316) When Tyolet dismounted, he was disarmed and dressed in a tunic and wrapped in a light mantle. He washed his hands and went to eat.

(321) Suddenly a maiden arrived there—a proud and noble damsel; I do not wish to describe her beauty, but neither Dido, in my opinion, nor Helen had so beautiful a face. She was the daughter of the King of Logres. She was seated on a white palfrey and brought a small white hound following behind her. She had hung a small golden bell around the neck of the white hound, whose coat was very delicate and clean. Still on her horse, she came before the King and greeted him.

(335) "My lord King Arthur, may omnipotent God who reigns on high save you!"

(337) "May He who protects good people also care for you, my pretty friend."

(339) "My lord, I am the daughter of a king and queen; my father is the King of Logres, and he and my mother have no other children. Out of love they ask you, as a king of great worth, if any one of your knights would be bold and fierce enough to cut off the white foot of the stag. Noble Sir, he would give it to me, and I would take such a man as my husband and have no interest in any other. Never will any man have my love if he does not bring me the white foot of the large, beautiful stag,

who has such a shiny coat that it looks almost golden. It is well-guarded, by seven lions."

(357) "By my faith," said the King, "I promise you that such will be the covenant. The man who gives you the foot of the stag will have you as his wife."

(361) "And I, Lord King, for my part, agree that such is the covenant."

(363) They swore to and established such a covenant between the two of them. In all the hall every knight who considered himself of any value said that he would go look for the stag if he could.

(369) "This hunting dog," she said, "will lead you to where the stag is accustomed to travel."

(371) Lodoer was very eager for it, and he was the first to go looking for the stag. He asked King Arthur, and the King did not forbid him to do it. He took the small hound, mounted his horse, and went out to get the foot of the stag. The hound which accompanied him led him straight to a river that was big and wide, black, menacing, and swollen; it was four hundred fathoms wide and at least a hundred deep. The hound went straight into the water, thinking after its instincts that Lodoer would plunge in as well, but he did nothing of the kind. He decided that he would not go in, for he had no desire to die. He said to himself thoughtfully: "He who does not have himself has nothing; he keeps a good castle, it seems to me, who takes care of it so that it is not harmed!" So the dog came out of the water and returned to Lodoer; and Lodoer went away, leading the hound behind him. He came straight to the court without delay, where many lords were assembled. He returned the hound to the courteous, beautiful maiden.

(401) Then the King asked him if he had brought the foot, and Lodoer answered him that someone else still had the chance to be shamed because of it. Throughout the hall they mocked him; Lodoer shook his head at them, and said that *they* should go look for the foot and bring it back.

(409) Many went to seek the stag, and they asked for the maiden, but no one else who went there sang a song any different from the one that Lodoer—who was a valiant knight—had sung, except one knight who was very brave and agile; he was called Knight-Beast, and Tyolet was his name.

(419) Tyolet went directly to the King and asked at once that the maiden be kept for him, and he would go to seek the white foot. He said that he would never return until he had cut off the white right foot of the

stag. The King allowed him to go, and Tyolet was knighted and was well-armed with weapons. Then he went to the maiden and asked her for her small white hound. She gave it to him graciously, and he took his leave of her.

(433) They rode and travelled for so long that they came to the ford at the wide, rushing river, which was very deep and menacing. The hound jumped into the water and went swimming across it at once; Tyolet went in after it immediately. He followed the hound, still mounted on his horse, until he came out on dry land. The hound led him on until it showed him the stag; seven lions guarded the stag, and they loved it with a great love.

(447) Then Tyolet looked and saw it in a meadow where it was grazing; none of the seven lions was near by. Tyolet spurred his horse and made it go straight up to the stag. Then Tyolet began to whistle, and the stag came straight up to him, most gently. Tyolet whistled twice, and the stag at once stood still. He drew his sword swiftly, caught the stag by its white right foot, cut it off at the joint and put it in his pouch. The stag gave a loud cry, and the lions at once rushed up in great haste: they saw Tyolet. One of the lions attacked the horse on which he was sitting in his armor, ripping away the skin and the flesh of its right shoulder. When Tyolet saw that, he struck one of the lions with the sword that he carried and cut the sinews of its chest: he had no more trouble with that lion! His horse fell to the ground beneath him, and as Tyolet abandoned it the lions attacked him. They rushed at him from all sides, ripped his good hauberk and the flesh of his arms and sides, and wounded him in so many places that they very nearly devoured him. They ripped all his flesh, but Tyolet killed every one of them. It was only with difficulty that he freed himself from them. He fell beside the lions who had injured him, and his body was mauled so badly that he would never be able to make it whole again.

(489) Then a knight came riding up, seated on a steel grey charger. He stopped and looked about; he pitied Tyolet and lamented. Tyolet, who had fainted from his efforts, opened his eyes and recounted his adventure to him; he told it from beginning to end. He pulled out the foot from his pouch and gave it to the knight. And the knight thanked him very much for it because he wanted the foot very much. He took his leave of Tyolet and went off.

(502) When he was on his way, he thought to himself that if the knight who had given him the foot remained alive, and if he wasn't willing to flee, something bad might happen to him because of it. He

turned back immediately, intending and planning to kill the knight, but he isn't going to issue a challenge. He thrust his sword right through his body. In fact, Tyolet will be cured of this wound, but the knight thought for certain that he had killed him. Then he started on his way, and he followed the direct road until he came to the court of the King.

(517) He asked the King for the maiden, showing him the white foot of the stag; but he did not have the small white hound that had led Tyolet to the stag. He watched for it morning and night, but he really wasn't too worried about it: The one brought the foot—whichever it might be who had cut it off—wanted, according to the covenant, to have the maiden, who was so very noble and beautiful. But the King was wise enough to ask him for a week's delay because of Tyolet who had not returned. Then his whole court would be assembled, but right then, there was no one there but his household men, who were quite noble and learned. So the knight granted the delay and remained at the court.

(535) But Gawain, who was courtly and well-versed in all the laws, went to look for Tyolet; the dog had returned and he took it with him. Quickly, the hound led him until he found Tyolet in a swoon in the meadow beside the lions.

(543) When Gawain saw the knight and the slaughter that he had accomplished, he greatly pitied the valiant knight. At once, he dismounted from his charger and addressed him gently. Tyolet answered feebly, but he managed to tell him the whole story of his adventure.

(551) Then a gentle, beautiful maiden arrived, riding on a mule. She graciously greeted Gawain, and he returned her greeting and he called her to his side and embraced her, holding her tightly. He asked her very sweetly and lovingly to take this knight—who had done such fine deeds—to the doctor of the Black Mountain. And she did as he asked; she conveyed the knight from that place and entrusted him to the doctor. In Gawain's name she entrusted Tyolet to the doctor, who received him willingly. He stripped him of his armor, laid him on a table, and cleaned his wounds, which were very bloody. When he thoroughly examined his body and removed the blood caked all over him, he saw that he would recover. At the end of a month he would be completely well.

(575) In the meantime, Gawain returned and dismounted in the hall. There he found the knight who had brought the white foot, and who had stayed at court long enough for the week to have passed by. Then the knight came to the King, greeted him, and spoke about the agreement

that the maiden had devised, and that the King, for his part, had accepted: that she would marry the man who gave her the white foot.

(587) The King said, "This is so."

(588) When Gawain had heard all this, he immediately stepped forward and said to the King, "If it were not that I should never refute any knight, sergeant, knave, or squire in the presence of you who are the King, I would say that he is lying. He never took the foot of the stag in the manner which he maintains. The man who wants to be praised for others' deeds, who wraps himself in another's mantle, who wishes to draw another's crossbow, and have himself praised for another's action, he who wants to joust and drag the dreaded serpent from the hedge by another's hand—he causes great shame to knights! It will soon be clear that what you say is worthless! Make your assault somewhere else; go to get what you want somewhere else, for you will not have the maiden!"

(611) "By my faith," said the knight, "Sir Gawain, now you take me for a villain, saying that I do not dare carry my own lance into combat to joust, that I know well how to draw another's crossbow, and drag out this serpent you are talking about by another's hand! There is no one, so I believe and maintain, who can't find me on the field of battle, if he wants to prove it against me!"

(621) While they were engaged in this dispute, they looked through the hall and saw Tyolet, who had arrived and dismounted outside at the stone. The King rose to meet him, threw his arms around his neck, and then kissed him with great love. Tyolet bowed before him, as a man does before his lord. Gawain kissed him; Urien, Kay, Yvain the son of Morgan, and Lodoer went up to kiss him, and so did all of the other knights.

(633) When he saw this, the knight who wanted to have the maiden by virtue of the foot he had brought—which Tyolet had given him—spoke again to King Arthur and made his request. But Tyolet, when he learned that the knight had asked for the maiden, spoke to him courteously and asked him calmly: "Sir Knight, tell me this, now as you stand before the King. I want to know for what reason you wish to claim the maiden."

(647) "By my faith," he replied, "I will tell you. It is because I have brought her the white foot of the stag. Both she and the King promised it."

(651) "Did you cut the foot from the stag? If this is the truth, let it not be denied."

(653) "Yes," he said, "I cut it off and I brought it here with me."

(655) "And the seven lions, who killed them?"

(656) The knight looked at him and said not a word, but he blushed with embarrassment.

(658) Tyolet then spoke again: "Sir Knight, who was it who was struck by the sword, and who was it who struck him with it? Tell me this if you please. In my opinion, it was you."

(664) The knight hid his face and was much ashamed.

(665) "But this was returning evil for good when you committed such an outrage. I had given you the foot I had cut from the stag graciously, and you repaid me by very nearly killing me for it. In fact I did almost die. I gave a gift to you; now I regret it. You thrust the sword which you carried through my body, and you certainly thought that I was dead. If you want to defend yourself against this charge, in the sight of these lords, I tender my pledge to King Arthur."

(679) The knight knew that Tyolet was telling the truth and begged for mercy for the blow. He feared death more than shame and in no way contradicted Tyolet's story. In the King's presence, he submitted to Tyolet and promised to do his bidding. And Tyolet pardoned him on the advice which he received on this matter from the King and from all of his lords. The knight fell to his knees and, then would have kissed Tyolet's foot, when Tyolet made him stand up and kissed him with great affection. I never heard this business mentioned again.

(693) The knight returned the foot to Tyolet, and Tyolet took it and gave it to the maiden. She surpassed in beauty both the fleur-de-lys and the blossoming rose when they are new-born in the summertime. So Tyolet asked for the damsel, and King Arthur granted her to him. The maiden accepted him and brought him into her country: he was king and she was queen.

Here ends the *Lai of Tyolet*.